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Editorial Comment

DROP-OUTS CAN ACHIEVE

Thomas Edison left school while in the sixth grade chiefly because, as his teacher reported, he was unable to profit from instruction in the classroom. Mrs. Edison, a former teacher, responded quietly that she would look after Thomas' education. Thomas tinkered with chemicals and "experimented" with electrical equipment. His contributions are well known to every school boy in our land.

Henry Ford had difficulty in completing the seventh and eighth grades, and his knowledge of academic affairs as an adult was decidedly limited. After his success as a designer and manufacturer of cars was well established, he set forth a plan whereby young men could work for a half day on an assembly line, learn a trade, and attend school in the afternoon. Unfortunately the possibilities of this plan have never been fully realized. It would be beneficial to potential drop-outs.

Abraham Lincoln was a "drop-out" of the educational system of his time. From his mother he learned the value of books and reportedly walked twenty-two miles to secure one. He read the Bible, Aesop's Fables, and Pilgrim's Progress after work in the forest and fields. He did "sums" before an open fireplace hours after his family was asleep. It was a long road from this environment to the Presidency.

What characteristics did these "drop-outs" have in common? There were two. Each youth learned the value of hard work, and each young man had a desire to amount to something. These "drop-outs" became involved in a drive toward their goal and profited by the hard, stark discipline of their world. There were no coffee breaks, no fringe benefits, no forty-hour weeks, and no governmental subsidies. Each man was "on his own," and group participation and group thinking were unknown. Some critics of this "rugged individualism" will label the world in which these "drop-outs" lived as a primitive society. This may be true, for in Guatemala today a child of seven years has learned to take his place alongside his parents in providing for the sustenance of his family. Primitive society? Perhaps. Are we teaching our youth the value, dignity, and necessity of hard work? Are we showing them that achievement over and beyond that which is expected of them is essential to their success and inner satisfaction? An honest day's work, a family well reared, friendship bestowed when needed are but simple examples of worthy contributions in our world. Are we making it easy or difficult for our "drop-outs" to appreciate these values.

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Editor